

LOUISIANA NOW

NEWS, OPPORTUNITIES AND WITNESS
OF UNITED METHODIST MINISTRIES

www.la-umc.org | **Spring 2014**

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ON THE JOURNEY

A MESSAGE FROM BISHOP CYNTHIA FIERRO HARVEY

It has been 18 months since our arrival in Louisiana. My, how time flies! Much has happened, and much is still yet ahead for the great people we call United Methodists in Louisiana.

By mid-April, all the districts will have been visited at least twice. The number of districts in the Louisiana Annual Conference has been reduced from seven to six. We set forth a new vision and mission—and a set of core values that will guide our future. Appointments have been made, Annual Conference has been held, a vision team called the Joshua Team has been hard at work, and the re-structure team will have a report for this year's Conference. Mission teams have been sent to the four corners of the planet and lives are being changed. There is so much happening in and around us.

I am pleased with progress but, of course, I am not a patient person and see so much yet ahead. I am trying to be intentional and deliberate, working slowly and carefully.

I am excited about this new magazine for communicating what is happening in mission and ministry in Louisiana. You will find this first issue chocked full of outward and visible signs of transformation as the Spirit stirs all around us. Not only are communities being transformed, but even more importantly, people are being transformed.

In fact, we are:

- Leading others into abundant life in Christ,
- Engaging in our communities locally and globally in significant ways,
- Learning, living and telling the Gospel story to the nations,
- Reaching out and drawing people from all walks of life.

We are beginning to see fruit on the vines that have been tilled and pruned and carefully nourished by the Spirit. We are hearing of young seminarians from around the U.S. who want to come to Louisiana to serve. You paid 97% of your apportionments; more than many Annual Conferences. Louisiana gives more to missions per worshipper than almost any other Conference in the United States. There are many indicators of strength among us, yet there is still much work ahead. We still have churches that report no professions of faith or baptisms. While metrics do not always tell the whole story, they do serve as indicators of vitality. I said it at Annual Conference and will continue to say it over and over again - when we are leading others into abundant life in Christ, engaging in the community, learning, living and telling the Gospel story, and reaching out and drawing in people from

all walks of life, we WILL have vibrant, vital congregations that are alive and serving as beacons of hope in their communities. We WILL have to establish new faith communities; we will have many more professions of faith and baptisms. We will be transforming the world. We will not be able to help ourselves!

Change is hard for all of us, but I also know that change is necessary for us as an Annual Conference, as a denomination and as a church. The 2014 Louisiana Annual Conference will be one of those occasions for change. The planning team has been hard at work and while I don't want to give away too much, I ask you to stay open to the excitement that is yet ahead. The theme "Woven Together, Changing the World" will bring a freshness to our time together. I hope that you will plan now to be at the Pre-Conference Meeting scheduled for 3 p.m. on May 18 in each of your districts. I will be with you at all six district locations via live feed. You will be able to join others from across the conference who will gather simultaneously through the gift of technology and a live feed. We will talk about the format for this year's Annual Conference, teach you a few songs and begin to experience the Spirit's stirring among us. I will give you a couple of hints about Annual Conference...You will want to arrive as early as possible on Sunday, and you will want to be present on Tuesday night! This year's event will be held June 8-11 at Centenary College.

There is so much ahead for us. Mission teams continue to spread themselves around the world, the 2014 Louisiana Skeeter Run is around the corner, the Word is being preached and the Good News proclaimed.

My prayer each day is that we might remain faithful to God, who has called us. I pray that we not become distracted but instead hold nothing sacred but the mission - to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

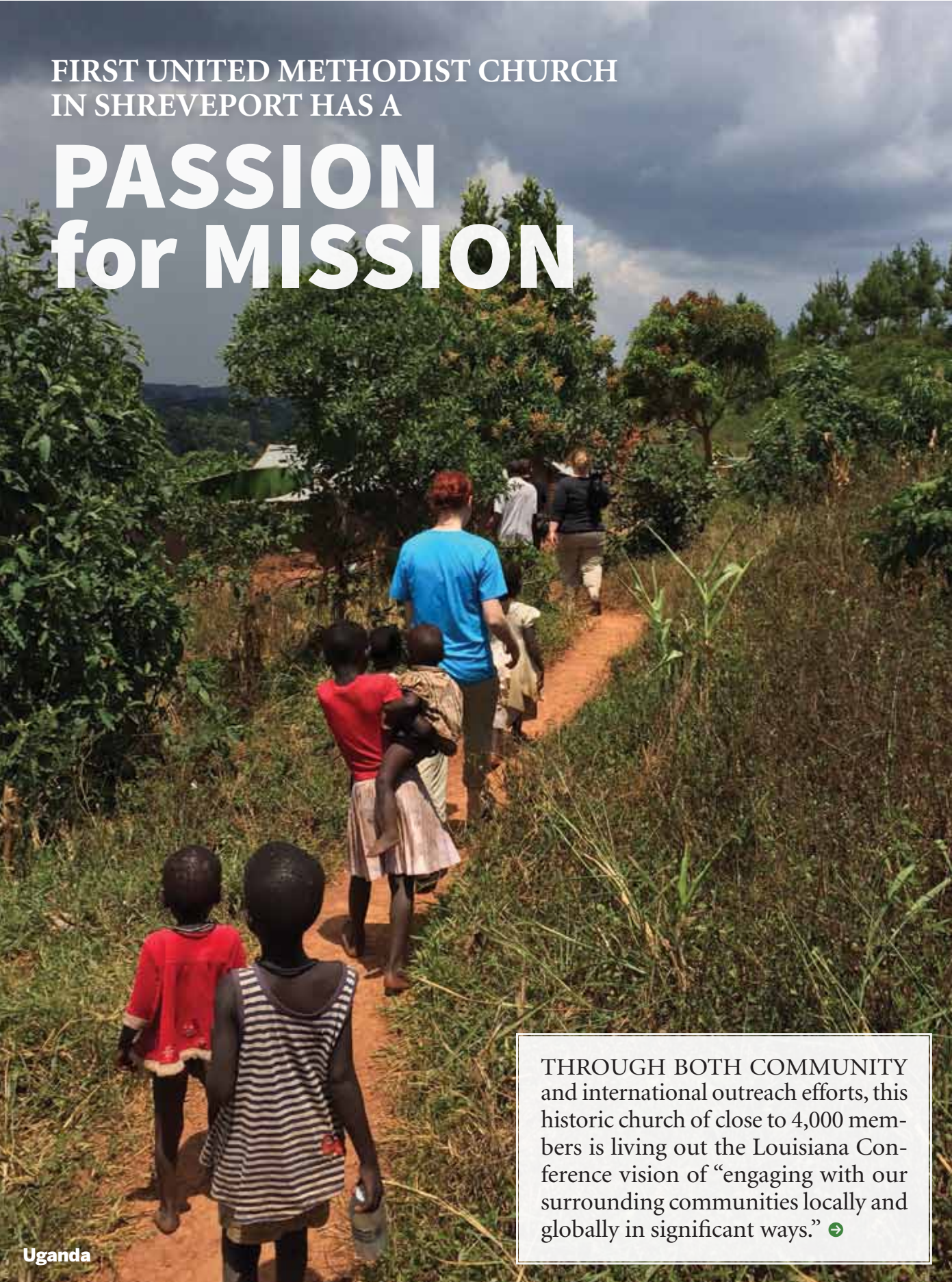
Blessings to you, your families and your congregations! May you experience God's grace and peace in all you do.

In Christ,

Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey



**WE ARE
BEGINNING TO
SEE FRUIT ON
THE VINES...**



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
IN SHREVEPORT HAS A

PASSION for MISSION

Uganda

THROUGH BOTH COMMUNITY and international outreach efforts, this historic church of close to 4,000 members is living out the Louisiana Conference vision of “engaging with our surrounding communities locally and globally in significant ways.” ➡

PASSION FOR MISSION

FOR EXAMPLE, FIVE YEARS AGO, First UMC made the decision to support Darivager and Big House orphanages in Les Cayes, Haiti. With the church's annual financial commitment of more than \$65,000, First UMC is currently supporting the life care expenses of 100 children in the impoverished, earthquake-torn country. Through the efforts of medical mission teams sent to Haiti over the years, the church has established and nurtured relationships with its underserved communities.

In 2012, First UMC took a bold stand

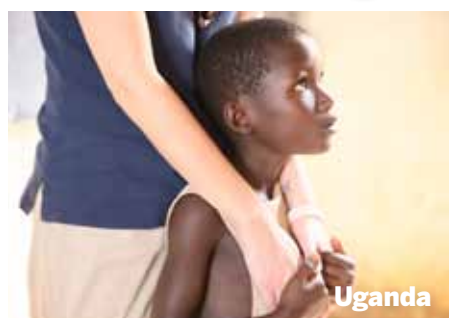
mission opportunities in five countries—Haiti, Costa Rica, Uganda, Ecuador and Russia. This level of involvement in international service sets a standard that is not only impressive, but inspiring to other churches in their quest to grow missions.

Knowing that a staff director was essential for driving its mission initiative, in August of 2013, First UMC hired Ashley Goad as the full-time Director of Global Missions. She is responsible for creating partnerships across the world, forming mission teams to serve alongside missionaries and to become

mission teams from performing the same medical tasks and procedures multiple times on patients.

Medical missions to Haiti are slated for June 7-14 and Oct. 4-11, 2014. Teams will also head to the country in February, June and October of 2015. Medical teams will serve at Dr. Junior's clinic at Cambry. He will organize the work and line up the patients for the teams, with assistance from Dr. Will Caldwell from Charlotte, North Carolina.

This April, the church is partnering with First Presbyterian Church in Shreveport to



for mission. Rev. Dr. Pat Day, senior pastor, issued a challenge to the church—that by 2022, First UMC would have established a solid mission partnership on every continent and made provisions for a mission budget of \$1 million dollars.

This inspiring journey was initiated by learning more about how to bring clean water to countries where none exists. Members of First UMC attended Clean Water U in Oxford, Miss., a training offered by Living Waters for The World. In November of 2013, the first clean water system underwritten by First UMC was installed in Savanette, Haiti. A community of more than 1,000 is now drinking and using clean water.

Beginning in 2014, First UMC will offer

involved in global projects.

Goad is a veteran of more than 50 short-term missions to different parts of the world. She previously served as the director of Solar Under the Sun, a nonprofit organization which trains teams to install solar-powered systems in impoverished communities.

First UMC continues to sponsor children at Darivager Orphanage in Haiti. Each month, money sent by the church pays for food, educational supplies and lodging expenses. The church is also funding the salary of Dr. Osselin Junior, who oversees the medical care of the children at Darivager, Big House and three other orphanages. He has hired an administrator to keep records on each child, which will help prevent

install a clean water system in Gonaives, Haiti. The team will lead the installation of the system at Myan Orphanage, followed by a visit to Darivager Orphanage to make upgrades on the facility's solar power system. And of course, visits with the children living in the two homes are the highlight of the mission!

First UMC's work in Costa Rica will be facilitated through a partnership with Wil and Yolanda Bailey of Costa Rica Mission Projects. Wil is a North Carolina Conference Missionary and United Methodist Volunteers in Mission Individual Volunteer. He works through the Costa Rican Methodist Conference to identify construction projects and manages a Costa Rican staff compiled

of trained workers, who work side by side with church volunteers. “This is a perfect mission for first time volunteers, students and young adults, as no skills are required. There is something for everyone,” said Goad. The mission is set for May 24-31.

In Uganda, First UMC will partner with missionaries Jeremy and Tamara Boone who have spent years living among the people of the Masese Slum near Jinja. “They started by holding weekly prayer meetings and Bible studies and teaching job skills to the young women. Now, they are expanding their focus

Goad. This site also accommodates medical mission teams.

A team from First UMC and Broadmoor UMC, Shreveport recently returned from a mission to First UMC, Ekaterinburg. James Gillespie, long-time coordinator of the Russia Initiative for the Louisiana Conference and member of Broadmoor UMC, accompanied the team. Conference teams have been serving in Russia for the past 20 years, and First UMC used this “fact-finding” mission to discover how the church might best serve future needs of the church and the

“Whether sorting gently used household items to give someone a fresh start, having conversation and prayer with someone who is hurting, sharing a meal or painting a house, the outreach missions of First UMC lovingly bring together folks from all walks of life,” said Danielle Reans, director of local missions for First UMC.

Through its Community Grants Program, the church is involved in fiscal and relational partnerships with Catholic Charities, the MLK Health Center, the Northwest Louisiana Food Bank and The Hub, which



to HIV/AIDS prevention, and giving appropriate microloans,” said Goad. While the Boones are not in a position to host teams of great size, they welcome prayer and discussion. Support for the Boones will go toward their micro-finance ministry.

Hands-on support in Uganda will be provided by teams helping to construct a school and an orphan center. A team is scheduled to serve in Uganda from June 12-22.

A mission team to Ecuador, slated for November 22-29, will involve the construction of education facilities housing classrooms for 200 students, kitchen facilities and a cafeteria. “Each construction mission has a Vacation Bible School element, which makes this trip perfect for groups of all ages,” said

Russian community.

Rev. Day is awed by the church’s response to the challenge he issued in 2012. “Vision 2022 at First Shreveport began with that challenge just two years ago. We have had an amazing buy-in from the congregation. We are debt free. Our current operating budget, specifically for missions, is at \$333,000—one third of our 10-year goal. And First UMC is taking a missional approach to all we do,” he said.

In addition to its global focus, First UMC enthusiastically addresses the needs of the church’s surrounding community. One of its most popular local ministries is “City Saturday Missions,” a variety of outreach opportunities for church volunteers.

focuses on urban ministry in the city of Shreveport.

First UMC also provides volunteers to serve at the food bank, and helps serve community meals like their annual Christmas Day Love Feast.

“Throughout the congregation are uncountable individuals serving independently to enhance the lives of their neighbors. It is our mission to ‘Embrace Grace and Grow Leaders’ to demonstrate Christ’s welcoming love as far as we can reach through our monetary resources, our state of the art facilities and digital strength, and—perhaps most of all—through our one to one relationships in giving and serving in the community,” said Rev. Day. ■

30 DIAPER CHANGES,
15 BOTTLES,
20 SNACKS AND MEALS AND

hundreds of hugs and kisses



These essential tasks (and countless more!) are part of the daily routine for the Plauché family, members of St. Luke Simpson United Methodist Church in Lake Charles—and **parents of quintuplets.**

BY BETTY BACKSTROM

COVER AND STORY PHOTOS
BY SARAH BACKSTROM

The quints, now 18 months old, were born three months prematurely. “Amazingly, each and every one of the babies weighed over two pounds,” said Shawn Parks, maternal grandmother to the five children.

Caring for the needs of one toddler, or even twins, can be a daunting task. In the case of five children that are exactly the same age, raising this large group “takes a village.” Or, possibly a church.

“The church family has been there for the Plauchés, not just spiritually, but physically. Since the day the quintuplets were brought home from the hospital, church members have helped feed, bath and love these babies,” said Beth Bowers, one of a team of volunteers from St. Luke Simpson UMC and neighboring University UMC that assists Sarah Plauché and her children on a daily basis.

A carefully orchestrated schedule is kept

by Sarah, who receives help from people like Beth several times a day. “We have been fortunate enough to have a huge number of volunteers that continue to help with feedings throughout each day. From the time we announced that we were expecting quintuplets, the family has been overwhelmed and humbled by the compassion and generosity of those in our church and in our community,” said Plauché, shown top right with her mother Shawn and the five children.

All it takes is a quick visit with the quintuplets to get a clear picture of just how much hands-on help is needed to keep this group well-fed, healthy and happy. On the afternoon of the photo shoot for the pictures used in this article, I watched as Parks and two church volunteers tended to the needs of each child as they woke from their afternoon naps. First, there were the



**IN THE
PLAUCHÉ
HOUSEHOLD,
SUCH SMALL
MIRACLES
ABOUND
EVERY DAY.**

sounds from each toddler as he or she was rousing from slumber. Then, volunteers took turns bringing the children, one at a time, from their beds into the gated and baby-proofed section of what was once the home's family room (now, known as the "baby zone"). Each child received hugs, a fresh diaper and a bottle of milk in rapid succession.

During the photo shoot, the children were in good spirits and enjoyed the experience. Little Reese spontaneously climbed into the toy car with his brother Owen and flashed a grin right at the camera. Corinne and Tessa, fascinated with the smaller toys surrounding them, looked up at the lens at just the right moment. And "happy go lucky" Miles gave the photographer the same joyful grin he had sported during the entire afternoon. After the shoot, the group realized that we had just witnessed a small "miracle"—five toddlers all smiling and looking toward a camera at the same instant!

In the Plauché household, such small

miracles abound every day. Perhaps one of the most important such occurrences is the unflagging and dependable assistance from caring church and community volunteers that are helping to raise this precious group of children.

Sarah Plauché is grateful for the assistance from St. Luke Simpson that takes many forms. Some is provided through hands-on caretaking. Often, prayer support lends comfort. And other help comes through financial contributions.

One very unique and creative example of this monetary help is being provided by proceeds from a car show, sponsored by St. Luke Simpson UMC on March 15 to benefit the Plauché family. The show is the brainstorm of Bowers and her husband Joe, who coordinated the event. "Joe and I have always been involved in mission work at church, and we also enjoy car shows as Joe recently finished a five-year restoration on his 1972 Dodge Charger. We both decided to see if St. Luke Simpson's mission

team would like to put on a show for cars, trucks and motorcycles to benefit the quintuplets. Our minister,

Rev. Jack O'Dell liked the idea, calling it an 'opportunity to offer a good community experience while doing good,'" said Beth, who is shown top left with Rev. O'Dell at St. Luke Simpson UMC, next to her husband's restored automobile.

"Cars for Quints" features concessions, bake sale items and of course, the car show.

Sarah Plauché feels "very blessed" that volunteers from St. Luke Simpson UMC coordinated "Cars for Quints." "We feel so fortunate to have people in our lives who are eager to do things to benefit our 'miracle babies.'"

Most would agree that it really does "take a village" to raise a child. The congregation of St. Luke Simpson UMC in Lake Charles embodies that concept, blessing the lives of the Plauché family while receiving blessings of their own, "one hundredfold." ■

FURRY FELINE FRIENDS
KEEP COMFY WITH
**skeeter run
cat beds**

When organizers for the 2013 **Louisiana Skeeter Run** selected the date of March 2 for the statewide event, they didn't anticipate the unseasonably cold weather that would greet runners and walkers that frigid morning.



BELOW

Hannah Merrifield enjoys sitting on a cat bed sewn by her owner Justice Merrifield, crafted out of Skeeter Run t-shirts.



"For most of the 10 sites throughout the state, race volunteers woke up to temperatures in the 20's. It's always nice to have cooler temperatures for a race, but it was truly cold!," said Gary Merrifield, event chair for last year's run and chair for the 2014 event slated for Oct. 11.

Despite the chilly weather, all 10 races went off without a hitch on that "frozen" Saturday. Merrifield was assisting that morning with registration for the Baton Rouge event, bringing Skeeter Run t-shirts to distribute at the race site at First United Methodist Church. Nearly 500 runners and walkers signed up for the Baton Rouge race, but a number of those pre-registered for the event were a "no show."

"We had quite a few shirts that were not picked up that morning. I think the weather played a role in some folks deciding to stay home and stay warm," said Merrifield with a laugh.

So when the 50-plus volunteers did "take down" after the Baton Rouge run, the left over t-shirts were loaded into Gary's trailer to take home. As luck would have it, some of the shirts were damp and became slightly mildewed before they were rescued from the trailer.

Fortunately, the damaged shirts were repurposed through a volunteer project spearheaded by Merrifield's daughter, Justice, a 13-year-old eighth grader at Louisiana State University's Laboratory School.

"In order to salvage the material, my wife Mandi laundered the shirts thoroughly. My daughter Justice got the idea of turning the shirts into beds for cats that could be donated to a local pet shelter. So she spent hours making these beds, which she is distributing to be used by cats without a home," said Gary.

The Merrifield family is not only very fond of cats, they love all animals. The menagerie of pets owned by the family includes three horses, four dogs, two cats, a number of fish, and a bearded dragon named ZuToo.

This busy family—which is actively involved at University United Methodist Church in Baton Rouge—is also passionate



about running. Both teens are members of the Lab School's track team while Gary keeps a busy racing schedule, participating in triathlons. Mandi runs and has competed in several 5Ks.

This passion for running made Gary's interest in the conference-sponsored Skeeter Run a natural fit. Serving as overall event chair for the second year in a row, his enthusiasm for the cause only continues to grow.

"The Skeeter Run is such a perfect project for United Methodist churches, helping us to connect with our communities while raising funds and awareness for Imagine No Malaria. The best thing about the race is that this fun event appeals to all ages and gives our churches a chance to come together for a good cause," said Merrifield. "The Skeeter Run allows us to showcase what our church family can do and offers those without a church home a chance to experience church life."

Last year's event was a big success with approximately 2,500 volunteers and participants raising nearly \$78,000 for this life-saving initiative sponsored by The United

Methodist Church.

"The more participation we have, the greater chance we have to raise awareness about malaria, which kills hundreds of thousands of people, annually. The vast majority of these victims are children under the age of five," said Betty Backstrom, director of communications for the Louisiana Annual Conference. Backstrom serves as conference-liason for the Skeeter Run.

The 2014 Louisiana Skeeter Run will be held in seven cities, with a run in each of the six districts and a race at The Wesley Center in Woodworth. Host churches for the events include Asbury UMC, Lafayette (Acadiana District); University UMC, Baton Rouge (Baton Rouge District); University UMC, Lake Charles (Lake Charles District); Trinity UMC, Ruston (Monroe District); St. Timothy on the Northshore UMC, Mandeville (New Orleans District); and First UMC, Shreveport (Shreveport District). Due to conflicts, the Shreveport District run will be held Aug. 9 instead of Oct. 11.

Local churches will soon be receiving promotional tools to "get the word out" to their congregations about the race.

ABOVE

The Merrifield family—Mandi, Justice, Kaelan and Gary—are pictured outside of University United Methodist Church, host church for the 2014 Skeeter Run in Baton Rouge. Participants are shown enjoying last year's event, top left, and the 2012 Skeeter Run, top right.

Pastors and lay leaders of local churches are encouraged by Bishop Harvey and the Appointive Cabinet to:

- Promote the Skeeter Run through church media, Facebook, websites and newsletters.
- The registration site (which is being tweaked to enhance efficiency) will go live in the next months. We will keep you posted; please encourage church members to register once the site is live.
- Pastors, please speak about the event from the pulpit during announcements!
- Make SURE there is a point person in your congregation who is responsible for signing up church members for the run! This will increase your church's level of participation. ■



“buddy church”

HELPS CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS



Rob Wright is helping his congregation—First United Methodist Church in Alexandria—better **serve children with special needs** in his community.

For several years, Wright has been active in “Buddy Camp,” a community-wide project supported by First UMC that allows children both with—and without—developmental challenges to participate in a week-long summer day camp.

Working with the parents of these children with special needs, Wright began to realize that there are not enough services in place to help these families.

“They love Buddy Camp. But Buddy Camp is only five days, for one week out of 52 weeks a year,” said Wright. “These families spend the majority of their year looking

forward to Buddy Camp, but when Friday comes, they go home to wait for the next camp, which is 51 weeks away.”

He began to recognize how difficult it can be for these families to do things that most people take for granted. “They often don’t go out to eat because their child won’t sit in the booth quietly, and they get strange looks,” Wright explained. “Or they don’t go to church because in church you have to be quiet and the only time you get up is when the preacher tells you to please rise and sing. Also, the sanctuary could be too light or too dark—or the music too soft or too loud—for many children with special needs to tolerate.”

It is from this realization that the concept of “Buddy Church” was born. In response, First UMC has since initiated several programs for children with special needs that bring them, and their families, more fully into the life of the church.

To provide a welcoming atmosphere for the children, a Sunday school classroom was converted to host the children while their parents attend worship services. The class was launched on Christmas Eve, with four adults working one on one with four class members with special needs.

Currently, children and their families are invited to attend Sunday school with their peers, or if they prefer, to join in “Buddy

Church” activities. “‘Buddy Church’ will take place at the first part of every month with the hope of expanding these offerings in the fall of 2014,” Wright said.

Plans are underway to develop an ongoing monthly worship service at First UMC for families and their children with special needs.

The church’s website has this to say about its annual “Buddy Camp,” which serves children who have completed Kindergarten through fifth grade: “Campers are placed into buddy pairs to allow all children the opportunity to share quality, structured camp activities that encourage them to learn more about each other and develop friendships, healthy behaviors and Christian attitudes.”

These principles are guiding the development of “Buddy Church.” By creating a comfortable space within its walls for children with special needs, these families—and those within First UMC’s congregation—are blessed with a wider group of Christian friendships and supportive relationships.

To find out more information about the program, visit www.fumca.org/buddy ministries; to know more about First UMC’s camp offering, visit www.fumca.org/buddycamp. ■

Article written with assistance from Bill Sumrall, First UMC’s Communications Assistant.

REV. IRBY AND REV. CANNON TO SERVE AS SUPERINTENDENTS FOR SHREVEPORT AND ACADIANA DISTRICTS

Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey and the members of the Appointive Cabinet recently announced that Rev. Ken Irby will be appointed Shreveport District Superintendent and that Rev. John Cannon will serve as Acadiana District Superintendent after the 2014 Louisiana Annual Conference.

Rev. Irby, pastor of Broadmoor UMC in Shreveport, replaces Rev. Donald Avery in the role of Shreveport DS as Rev. Avery moves to retired status. Rev. Cannon, pastor of First UMC in Minden, replaces Rev. Ed Boyd in the role of Acadiana DS as Rev. Boyd moves to retired status.

"I'm honored to be invited to serve in this way," said Irby. "I hope my 30 years of experience in local church ministry will enable me to help churches and pastors in my district. It is a challenging time to be the church, and it calls for the best that we all have to give."

A native of Dallas, Texas, Irby obtained a Bachelor of Arts in Religious Education from Oral Roberts University and a Masters of Divinity from the Candler School of Theology from Emory University. His appointments in the Louisiana Annual Conference include First UMC, Slidell, associate pastor (1984-86), Luling UMC (1986-88), Amite and Independence UMCs (1988-92), First UMC, Lafayette (1992-95), University UMC, Baton Rouge (1995-2005) and Broadmoor UMC, Shreveport (2005-2014).

Ken and his wife Kay have three children, Seth, 25, Nathan, 22, and Caroline, 19.



Rev. Ken Irby



Rev. John Cannon

"My passion in ministry is helping people connect with Christ's ministry of out-reaching love," said Cannon. "As a district superintendent, I hope to continue in this ministry with the churches of the Acadiana District by encouraging congregations to focus on the mission of 'making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world' and on living out the values of Louisiana Annual Conference."

Cannon has a Bachelor of Arts in English from the University of Arkansas, his Juris Doctorate from the LSU Law Center, and a Masters of Divinity from Saint Paul School of Theology in Kansas City. Prior to seminary, he served as an assistant district attorney in Baton Rouge, where he was a member of First United Methodist Church.

His appointments include a new church start in Broussard-Youngsville (which became Faith Community UMC), and First UMC in Minden, serving since 2007.

Cannon and his wife Erin both grew up in Shreveport. They have four children, Michael, 13, David, 11, and seven-year-old twin girls Elizabeth and Mary Claire. Family dog Goldie was adopted from an animal shelter. ■

LOUISIANA NOW

Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey,
Resident Bishop

Rev. Don Cottrill,
Provost

Betty Backstrom,
Communications Director/Editor

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in memoriam

Mary Katherine Davidson Paine
12/19/2013

Dorothy Dowden • 12/22/2013

Rev. Denver Dale Lyons • 12/22/2013

Rev. Joe Hunter • 12/28/2013

Rev. George WC Calvin • 1/4/2014

Rev. Wilson J. King • 1/9/2014

Rev. Rand Guy Ernest • 1/18/2014

Rev. John Calvin Coker • 1/28/2014

Geraldine Crawford Smith • 2/8/2014

Rev. Melvin Ray Holt • 2/10/2014

Rev. Albert Holland • 2/10/2014

Rev. Abraham Davis • 3/04/2014

calendar

MARCH

3/29

Confirmation Day with the Bishop
The Wesley Center, Woodworth, La.

3/30

One Great Hour of Sharing
(benefits UMCOR)

3/30-31

Division of Deacons and Diaconal
Ministers Retreat
The Wesley Center, Woodworth, La.

3/30-4/2

Division of Elders Retreat
The Wesley Center, Woodworth, La.

APRIL

4/3-5

Spiritual Academy Forgiveness Retreat
The Wesley Center, Woodworth, La.

4/8

Monroe District Gathering
First UMC, Monroe, La.

4/18

Attacca String Quartet Concert
in memory of Nancy Carruth
Rayne Memorial UMC, New Orleans, La.

4/20

Easter Sunday

4/25-27

United Methodist Women Assembly
Louisville, Kentucky

4/28-5/1

Spiritual Academy Spiritual
Direction Class
The Wesley Center, Woodworth, La.

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General Conference

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Preaching Excellence Plan

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A Message from Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey

The following are excerpts from Bishop Cynthia Harvey's Episcopal Address, delivered on June 8 during the 2014 Louisiana Annual Conference held at Centenary College in Shreveport.

Good evening. Wow! Here we are again, gathered as the people of God – the people we call United Methodists in Louisiana!

As we have journeyed through this year, I have been amazed at the movement of God's Spirit among us. I am encouraged by the common language we adopted last year – a language that orients our work and our lives together.

Let me remind us of what we said...

We chose to adopt the present mission statement of the United Methodist Church – to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

We stated as our preferred future, our vision, were we to stand in the future, we would see an Annual Conference – by the way, an annual conference is made up of people. It is not a building, or even the staff at 527 North Blvd. It is people like you.

It is YOU - laity and clergy - that said that were we to stand in the future, we would see churches, faith communities, people, lay and clergy alike that are:

- Leading others to abundant life in Christ.

That are:

- Engaging with the surrounding community, locally and globally in significant ways.

We would experience Louisiana United Methodists:

- Learning, living and telling the gospel story to the nations.

And that we would:

- Reach out and draw in people from all walks of life resulting in vibrant, alive and vital congregations.

We also said that we would lead with Integrity:

- Describing honestly what we see with grace and compassion

- That we would be guided and directed by missional purposes

- That we would be forthright and transparent in all that we do.

We said that we would lead with Accountability:

- Measuring our actions and decisions by their connection to the mission

- That we would be accountable for this connection to purpose

We would lead with an unrelenting love for all people:

- Placing the needs and interests of people before the needs and interests of the institution

- We would prioritize transformative relationships over sustaining buildings and budgets

We would lead with Courage and Risk:

- Believing that new times call for new actions

- Willing to trust ourselves and each other, and risk acting in new and courageous ways in order to transform a dying institution into a vibrant movement of faith and action

And finally, and perhaps most importantly, we said that we would hold nothing sacred but the mission...to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world:

- We said we would be open to the creative movement of God's Spirit, not institutional priorities, in order to serve the mission.

Friends, this is our divine DNA. This is what defines who we are and how we are living out who God has called us to be. Our DNA markers are named in our core values. It is this DNA that uniquely binds us together so that we might radically change the world.

Our DNA calls us to be the hands and feet of our Lord in a world that refuses to hear God's voice, but all too often listens to the confusion and chaos of the world.

So, how are we doing?

I have seen remarkable things happen as we live into our preferred future. I have seen ministry flourish in places where we are working

intentionally to deepen discipleship.

There are those of you who are taking seriously the call to lead others to abundant life in Christ, becoming truly aware of the movement of God among us. You are walking the streets of your neighborhood. You have attended Eagle Scout events, recitals, and community theater performances to support children that are not even your own.

You are moving out of your pews to impact your communities and I am overwhelmed by your willingness to find creative ways to meet the needs of the people in our state.

Yes friends, but, there is a "but"... There is still much work to be done. I wish we could take a victory lap but for all our efforts; there is still great unrest in the world, and right here in Louisiana.

There is racial tension, there are hungry people, lost people, people who don't know the love of Christ that you enjoy.

While not wanting to be the bearer of bad news, there are some statistics that indicate we have a ways to go.

Last year, of our 500 churches, 243 had no professions of faith and 53 had only one. Almost 50 percent of our congregations did not introduce one person to Jesus Christ. That is not acceptable!

I know what you are thinking, "But last year, bishop, you said it wasn't about the numbers. It was about making disciples."

You are absolutely correct, BUT, numbers tell us something about the state of our discipleship.

The metrics are the fruit, the outward and visible sign of our sharing the Good News of Christ. It takes people, people like you, to make disciples. I am not great at math, but the law of averages, and even more importantly the promise of Jesus who sends his disciples two by two, promises extraordinary things will happen when we move out into the world.

We have to be witnesses of the work of Jesus. When you joined the church, you said you



**TO READ
THE ADDRESS
IN FULL VISIT
[http://
www.la-umc
.org/pages/
detail/2167](http://www.la-umc.org/pages/detail/2167)**

would support the church with your prayers, presence, gifts, service and your witness. We have done a fine job of prayers, presence, gifts and service, but honestly these numbers bear out the fact that we have not been effective witnesses for Christ.

Our commitment is not a multiple-choice question – we cannot pick out the ones we want or are good at; we have to do all the markers of our ministry. We must embrace all of our DNA. Simply put, disciples make disciples.

Our preferred future hinges on our ability to bring others into right relationship with Christ and we can only bring them into right relationship if we are willing to intentionally offer them Christ. . .

Our churches, while not all the same, have within them embedded enough DNA to love God and neighbor.

When we Love God and Love neighbor, I believe we have the capacity to transform the world. When we reach out to those who live on life's margins, when we give voice to the voiceless, it is then that we connect and bump up against the holy.

Is this not what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?

Methodism started out as a renewal movement of the Church of England. Wesley turned 18th century England upside down.

He was not interested in doing church, or even doing it differently, but to help its members to live as real Christians striving for deep

and authentic discipleship.

The church is first and foremost a community of disciples seeking to be deeply and fully devoted to following Jesus Christ, and the church, as an institution or structure, is to serve that end. . .

Our preferred future, I believe, leads us to that end – to deepen our devotion to Jesus Christ.

When congregations are living a life of vitality, they seek to draw upon the power found in the community of the baptized to make disciples of Jesus Christ that will radically transform the world.

I want to see the people we call United Methodist engaged in the lives of people in their communities. I want people in your community to know who you are and for you to know them. If your church went away, I want them to grieve your departure from the community. I want you to be a witness to the work of Jesus! . . .

There are so many distractions. There are the distractions of the world, and there are the distractions of the church. There are so many things that cause us to become un-centered or unhinged from our relationship with God.

Time and words tend to give things power. While I don't want to give the conversations about schism and division of the church power over us, I would be remiss if I did not say something because there is so much press out there about the separation over the issue of sexuality, and friends, this is a distraction!

I stand before you tonight not just calling for unity, but crying, maybe even shouting for unity.

There is a lot of name calling going on – progressive, liberal, traditionalist, Orthodox, Wesleyan. I want us to be called Christian. I want us to be called disciples of Jesus Christ.

I am at times progressive, at times liberal, at times a traditionalist, at times even Orthodox – with a twist I've been told – and definitely, always Wesleyan.

Even with all of our brokenness and dysfunction, I believe we are still much better together than apart. Think of the things that unite us: Our baptism; our belief in the triune God – Father, Son, Holy Spirit; the Lord's Table – an

open table; our commitment to prayer, scripture, mission, holiness, grace – prevenient, justifying and sanctifying

We are like a dysfunctional family, yet with DNA that unites us, DNA that makes us distinctively different and at the same time uniquely the same.

What if here in Louisiana we could model for the rest of the denomination what it means to be the church in the world?

What if we said—We choose to hold nothing sacred but the mission. . .

Are we willing to set our personal opinions aside to say that here in Louisiana we hold nothing sacred but the mission – to make disciples of Jesus Christ?

When I was consecrated to this office I was asked to uphold The Book of Discipline (the law) of the church. I remain committed to that promise I made at my consecration. Until it changes – it is what it is. It does not matter what I believe personally or if I agree – I commit to uphold it.

Would I hope for kinder, more grace-filled language? – yes. Yet simply put, my prayer is that I may help lead the body so that we might listen intently and deeply to the spirit's stirring in our midst.

I am committed to work for unity. I am committed to our shared life together and will stand boldly with those who share in that same passion and commitment.

If you remember nothing else from this address, I want you to remember this – though we may not look the same or think the same on every issue, we are united through our common Holy Spirit DNA that must guide our lives, our work, and yes, our future. . .

The church today is calling for people who change what is possible.

I would like us to be ones who change what is possible, who live life differently.

I want to live like that, don't you? I want to do stuff that matters! I want us to be the ones who don't respect the status quo. Ones that cannot be ignored. Who don't hold back.

I want us to be a people who are not only woven together but act like they are woven together, love that they are woven together even with all of our quiriness, our uniqueness and all that we hold in common and in tension. ■

No, it's not The Oscars... It's **The Wesleys!**

Was that Billy Crystal? No, it was our very own Rev. Matt Rawle serving as host to the first ever "Wesley Awards," held Tuesday night of Annual Conference. Winners of the award (a.k.a. John Wesley Bobble-heads!) hailed from United Methodist churches from throughout the Louisiana Conference, recognized for implementing creative ministries that embody our Conference Core Values and Preferred Vision. Ministries that were lifted up were submitted for review prior to the 2014 Louisiana Annual Conference. Full descriptions of these ministries, and a list of all churches and institutions that submitted entries, can be found on the conference website at www.la-umc.org. Those receiving special recognition are listed below, along with a statement on how they fulfill our Conference Vision and Preferred Future statement!

ASBURY UMC, BOSSIER CITY

Renesting Project

Engaging with our surrounding communities locally and globally in significant ways

CHATHAM UMC, CHATHAM

Fun in the Sun

Leading others into abundant life in Christ

DOUGLAS UMC, RUSTON

Adopt A School Ministry

Engaging with our surrounding communities locally and globally in significant ways

FIRST UMC, ALEXANDRIA

Pub Theology

Learning, living and telling the gospel story to the nations

Laundry Love

Engaging with our surrounding communities locally and globally in significant ways

FIRST UMC, BATON ROUGE

Worship at Cypress Mounds

Learning, living and telling the gospel story to the nations

The America Street Service

Reaching out and drawing in people from all walks of life resulting in vibrant, alive and vital congregations

Got Ashes?

Learning, living and telling the gospel story to the nations

FIRST UMC, THIBODEAUX

Ministry with Children and Their Families

Learning, living and telling the gospel story to the nations

FIRST UMC AND MCGUIRE UMC, WEST MONROE

Freestore

Engaging with our surrounding communities locally and globally in significant ways

HOPE COMMUNITY UMC, BATON ROUGE

ABC Institute of Learning

Engaging with our surrounding communities locally and globally in significant ways

H.O.P.E. Summer Camp

Leading others into abundant life in Christ

LACOMBE UMC, LACOMBE

Zip Pack Ministry

Reaching out and drawing in people from all walks of life resulting in vibrant, alive and vital congregations

LAKEVIEW UMC, SHREVEPORT

Community Service Sunday and Creative Crafters

Engaging with our surrounding communities locally and globally in significant ways

LEA JOYNER MEMORIAL UMC, MONROE

Change to Make a Change

Reaching out and drawing in people from all walks of life resulting in vibrant, alive and vital congregations

NOEL MEMORIAL UMC, SHREVEPORT

Highland Blessing Dinner and Adult Learning Center

Learning, living and telling the gospel story to the nations

RAYVILLE UMC, RAYVILLE

Golden Arches Ministry



REVEILLE UMC, MONROE

Hope Restored Community Center

Reaching out and drawing in people from all walks of life resulting in vibrant, alive and vital congregations

ST. FRANCISVILLE UMC, ST. FRANCISVILLE

Regional GED Graduation Ceremony

Engaging with our surround communities locally and globally in significant ways

ST. MARK UMC, OPELOUSAS

Angel's Caregivers Support Group

Engaging with our surrounding communities locally and globally in significant ways

**UNIVERSITY UMC,
LAKE CHARLES**

Circle Up

Learning, living and telling the gospel story to the nations



Wesley Awards Lifetime Achievement

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

**United Methodist
Foundation of Louisiana**



Established in 1975, the United Methodist Foundation of Louisiana began with the scriptural concept of the "mustard seed." It all began with a \$5,000 check that was given to Bishop Finis Crutchfield and Dr. Jimmy Caraway, the first acting chairman of the Foundation. The funds under management by the Foundation as of the end of 2013 number \$145,393,797.

Louisiana's United Methodist Foundation is among the top Foundations throughout the United Methodist connection, in both size of funds managed and in the services and ministries provided. Under the leadership of Rob Fairly, Jr., (shown receiving the award), the institution provides guidance to local churches, Conference institutions and individuals in investing for the future, as well as the present. Among the services provided are planned giving education and opportunities that benefit the United Methodist church or ministry; loans to local churches and the Louisiana Annual Conference; grants for clergy and lay leadership; seminary service loans to offset the cost of seminary education; and other Louisiana Conference ministries. The Foundation also sponsors a program for younger clergy (Advancing Pastoral Leadership, or APL); one for more seasoned clergy (Leadership Excellence Advancement Program, or LEAP); and Cabinet retreats with Dr. Gil Rendle, author and consultant.

The Foundation believes in the Biblical concept of "the tithe." In fact, they double tithe, with 20% of the internally generated gross operating funds going toward ministry programming throughout the Conference.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Lydia Patterson Institute

In 1913, Lydia Patterson, a Methodist Missionary acting through the Women's Society of her church, noticed that young Hispanics in Segundo Barrio in El Paso, Tex. had no school to attend. She began to set up schools in the homes of some Mexican Methodists.

Her spirit and vision are still alive today at Lydia Patterson Institute (LPI), a mission program of the South Central Jurisdiction. Presently, more than 400 young men and women, a majority of whom are from Ciudad Juárez, continue to be educated in a rigorous academic environment while being nurtured in Christian values. LPI was one of the first schools in the United States to emphasize the teaching of English as a Second Language in 1921, and to then merge students into the appropriate grade level to put them on the path toward graduation from high school.

Affectionately known as "La Lydia," the school includes grades 9-12. These students travel across the border from Mexico every day to attend LPI. It is normal for students to spend two hours commuting to school and two returning home each school day. They also work at least one hour following the school day to assist in the care of the school facilities.

Ninety five percent of the school's graduates go on to attend college with assistance from academic scholarships. LPI graduates have also attended Centenary College, a United Methodist institution in Shreveport. Dr. Socorro de Anda, LPI's president, is shown receiving the award.



A PEOPLE
CALLED UNITED
METHODIST
THAT ARE
CHANGING THE
WORLD

Woven Together, Changing the World

Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey told conference members, ***“The closer you get to God, the riskier it gets”*** during her Episcopal Address delivered June 8 during the Communion Service at the 2014 Louisiana Annual Conference. ***“Woven Together, Changing the World”*** was the theme for this year’s Conference, held at Centenary College in Shreveport, La. from June 8-11.

The logo for this year’s Annual Conference, featuring a double helix, spoke to the DNA of the United Methodist movement, and the idea that we are woven by God into this DNA. In her Episcopal Address, Bishop Harvey said, “I want us to be a people who are not only woven together but act like they are woven together, love that they are woven together, even with all of our quirkiness, our uniqueness and all that we hold in common and in tension. A people called United Methodist woven together that are changing the world.” Read the Bishop’s address at <http://www.la-umc.org/pages/detail/2167>

Stacy Hood served as Worship Leader for the Communion Service, which featured youth teams of liturgical dancers and step dancers. An offering taken during the service raised more than \$33,400 for UMCOR health kits. Hood, director of Worship Related Ministries for Grace Community UMC in Shreveport, served as Worship Leader throughout this year’s Annual Conference.

Our very own Rev. Matt Rawle, pastor of The Well UMC, served as master of ceremonies for the first annual Wesley Awards celebration, held Tuesday evening. “A la” Oscars (in our case, “The Wesleys”), winners from throughout the conference were given “gold plated” John



Ordained Elders:
Edith Louise DeVilbiss-Finch, Andrew David Sutton,
Kathy Snare Wafer, and John Garrison Hankins



Ordained Deacon
Cathalyn Hildebrand Brewton



Ordained Provisional Deacon
Mary Nannette McMullen



Provisional Elders:
Rachel McConnell-Switzer, Theodore
Stanley Fine, and AnnaKate Rawles

Wesley bobble-head statuettes in recognition of outstanding ministries. To add to the fun and festive nature of the event, those attending dressed in outfits ranging from tuxedos to “tuxedo t-shirts,” church dresses to evening gowns, and Bermuda shorts to jeans. A list of Wesley Award recipients can be found on pages four and five in this issue of the Louisiana Now.

Prior to the start of the Sunday night Communion Service, conference members gathered outside the Gold Dome on

Centenary’s campus for a Louisiana tailgate party, enjoying music, refreshments from food trucks and lots of fellowship with friends, old and new!

Monday morning, after the Clergy and Lay Sessions were held at Brown Chapel and Broadmoor UMC respectively, conference members convened in the Gold Dome for a Celebration of Life, as we remembered those clergy and clergy spouses who have entered Life Eternal in the past year. Rev. Don Avery, Rev. Juliet Spencer



The 2014 class of clergy retirees was honored during Annual Conference. Clergy retirees include, front row, Revs. Ralph Ford, Lusinda Warren, Kibbie Hatfield, Linda Clark, and back row, Revs. Lance Brown, Ed Boyd, Don Avery, Jerry Hilbun and Gene Finnell. Not pictured are, Revs. Thomas Beeler, Samuel Bradley, Eddie Carpenter, Debbie Drash, Frances Guy, Alvin Hodges, Elva Jacobs, Jimmy Parker, Charles Penuell, Louis Smith and Thomas Wesley.

and Austin Rinehart served as speakers for the service.

Monday evening, the Ordination and Commissioning Service was held June 9 at First United Methodist Church in Shreveport with Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey as preacher. Four persons were ordained elders and received into full connection with the conference, and one was ordained deacon and received into full connection with the conference. Conference Lay Leader Carolyn Dove delivered the Laity Address to Conference members in the Gold Dome.

A budget of \$7,553,653 was proposed by CF&A for approval. An amendment proposing an additional \$60,000 in the budget for Wesley Foundations was approved by the body. A final budget of \$7,613,653 was approved by conference members.

The conference voted in favor of a petition calling for a “commitment to unity, peace and mission” in the Church. The item was submitted by 62 persons, both lay and clergy. The petition can be found online at <http://www.la-umc.org/>

[console/files/oForms_YJ7JB6/Petition_One_Annual_conference_2014_SNNZFEXEQ.pdf](http://www.la-umc.org/console/files/oForms_YJ7JB6/Petition_One_Annual_conference_2014_SNNZFEXEQ.pdf)

A presentation by the Restructure Task Force reported that the committee will submit its final report at the 2015 Annual Conference, with the intent of implementation by the 2016 Annual Conference. The group’s work is focusing on an alternative structure for our work as a conference.

The 2014 class of clergy retirees was honored during the traditional “Passing of the Mantle” service, held Wednesday morning in the Gold Dome. Rev. Don Avery represented the retiring class and Rev. Kathy Wafer represented the new full member class. A total of 20 clergy are retiring this year.

Retirees Rev. Ralph Ford and Rev. Ed Boyd led opening devotionals prior to the business sessions on Tuesday and Wednesday of Annual Conference.

Clergy appointments for 2014-15 may be found at http://www.la-umc.org/console/files/oForms_YJ7JB6/Appointments_2014-15_Final_YPKH2NCF.pdf ■



**“PRAY FOR
THE SPIRIT OF
GOD TO GUIDE
THE DECISIONS
THAT WILL BE
MADE...”**

Delegates from Near and Far

The United Methodist Church's top legislative body will meet in Portland, Oregon at the Oregon Convention Center, the largest convention center in the Pacific Northwest, on May 10-20, 2016.

General Conference is the top policy-making body of The United Methodist Church which meets once every four years. The conference can revise church law, as well as adopt resolutions on current moral, social and public policy and on economic issues. It also approves plans and budgets for

church-wide programs.

This international body is comprised of nearly 1,000 delegates elected by annual conferences (at annual conference sessions) to attend General Conference. They represent all annual conferences around the world. Half of the delegates are laity (non-clergy members), half are clergy.

Bishops attend the General

Conference but cannot vote. Different bishops serve as presiding officers during the conference. Other bishops cannot speak unless permission is specifically granted by the delegates.

During General Conference, delegates discuss and vote on petitions and resolutions proposed by individuals, agencies, annual conferences and other groups within the denomination. These actions may result in a revision of the Book of Discipline, the denomination's book of law, and Book of Resolutions, policies of the denomination on current social issues.

On June 10 during the 2014 Louisiana Annual Conference, conference members elected

delegates to the 2016 General and Jurisdictional Conferences. Clergy delegates to General Conference are Revs. Andy Goff, Juliet Spencer, Pat Day and Bernadine Johnson; and Lay delegates are Carolyn Dove, Dr. Sarah Kreutziger, Pete Aguila and Terrel DeVille. Additional clergy delegates to Jurisdictional Conference are Revs. Lynn Malone, Juan Huertas, Ellen Alston and James Mitchell; and additional Lay delegates are Stacy Hood, Amanda Price, Walter Weiss and Olivia Pruett. Alternate Clergy delegates are Revs. Katie McKay Simpson and Matt Rawle; and Lay delegates, Rob Fairly, Jr. and Todd Rossnagel.

During the gathering in 2016, delegates will wrestle with today's

issues in light of scriptural teachings and the church's understanding of that teaching. Hot button issues for the session will likely include the topics of human sexuality and inclusion, the worldwide nature of the church and the restructure of the church, according to Pete Aguila, a member of the denomination's Connectional Table and a member of University United Methodist Church in Baton Rouge, La.

The 59-member Connectional Table is a United Methodist governing body of clergy and lay people that coordinates the denomination's mission, ministry and resources. Any legislation adopted by the body would go to the denomination's top lawmaking assembly, General Conference, for action in 2016.

Paragraph 904 of the Book of Discipline, charges The Connectional Table (CT) with discerning and articulating the vision for the church and the stewardship of the mission, ministries and resources of The United Methodist Church.

Human sexuality

Following a panel discussion with three theologians invited to address United Methodist perspectives on human sexuality, the Connectional Table approved a process that affirms continued dialogue on human sexuality among Connectional Table members and people across the connection to inform a direction moving forward. Additional panel discussions, open to the public, are slated in the future.

The dialogue "is an exercise of our responsibility to be a common table for the church and to confer with one another as representatives of the church," said Dakotas-Minnesota Area Bishop Bruce R. Ough, Connectional Table chair,

the day before the event.

"The Connectional Table believes that we need some specific language to inform the discussion before we can seek effective feedback from the Connection and fully discern what our next steps will be," Ough said after the event, in a press release. "This decision has empowered the Table to begin developing such language, which would be open to debate, amendment and improvement before any final decision is made on adoption."

The push for more inclusive language in the Discipline in regard to human sexuality has drawn interest from throughout the denomination, said Aguila. Along with Rev. Mike Slaughter of Ginghamburg Church in Tipp City, Ohio, Rev. Adam Hamilton, pastor of the 18,000-member United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kan., offered "agree to disagree" legislation on the issue of homosexuality at the 2012 General Conference.

Though that effort failed, Hamilton continues to push for official, practical recognition of the church's division on the issue — and for denominational unity. He recently debuted "A Way Forward for a United Methodist Church," a proposal to let local churches decide — after a discernment process and super-majority vote — whether or not to be more inclusive on the subject of human sexuality. Under the plan, the denomination's annual (regional) conferences would decide for themselves if they would eliminate the current restrictions in the ordination process.

Aguila pointed out that moving in this direction would require a change in current church law as it deals with homosexuality.

But recently, a group of nearly 80 clergy, theologians and laity, again from a traditionalist or conservative perspective, responded with "An Open Letter to Revs. Adam Hamilton and Michael Slaughter."

The letter praises Hamilton and Slaughter for trying to address divisions in the denomination, but expresses concerns about the "local option approach." The letter holds that the option would turn the United Methodist Church from a "connectional to a congregation model of polity," and fears that the process will force "every congregation and annual conference to continue arguing about it for years to come."

Nature of the worldwide church

On the topic of the Worldwide Nature of the Church, Aguila explained that the CT's Missionary Collaboration Group on the subject continues to facilitate a space and place for the multiple groups that are working on worldwide pieces affecting our Book of Discipline and our organization around the mission.

This group is testing a process that engages delegates of General Conference in Christian conferencing around the issues facing the complexity of our worldwide church. Interested persons can contribute feedback to questions that the WWN Group is raising across the leadership of the denomination. The information can be found at www.umc.org/worldwide-nature.

Church vitality and Imagine No Malaria

Vital congregations are at the core of our ministry as an Annual Conference and as a denomination. Making Disciples of Jesus

Christ for the Transformation of the World begins most naturally in a local church. The denomination is committed to growing in vitality and mission as local congregations and as United Methodists.

Aguila added that strides in the area of Vital Congregations will be celebrated at General Conference in 2016, as well as the completion of the denomination's \$75 million fund raising campaign for Imagine No Malaria (funds raised, to date, total \$60 million.) The Louisiana Conference has played a significant role in raising funds and awareness for this denominational initiative through the conference-wide Louisiana Skeeter Run, entering its third year. Last year, 2,500 volunteers and participants raised nearly \$78,000 for Imagine No Malaria.

Four focus areas

Aguila added that our denomination continues to affirm Four Focus Areas in our ministry together, specifically developing principled Christian leaders, ministry with the poor, making new places for new people, and stamping out the global killer diseases of poverty.

Charged with the task of helping to direct the ministries and resources of The United Methodist church toward its mission, The Connectional Table has worked to connect the leaders in these Focus Areas to align their work and move toward setting signature goals for our 2016 General Conference in Portland.

Aguila encourages all United Methodists in the Louisiana Conference to "pray for the Spirit of God to guide the decisions that will be made on these, and other important issues, related to the mission of our Connection." ■



Local Pastors

1 Recognized for completing the License to Preach School were, front row, Bettie Jo Rhodes, Robbie Murry Alford, Debria Louis Upton, and back row, Bryan Garrett Sibley, Denise Latrell Smith, Valla Marie Johnson and Eugene Wathen Bryson III. Not pictured are, Chyrelena Lynn Peyton, Barbara Ann Soniat and John Elbert Tellis, Sr. Upton was also recognized for receiving her Certification in Youth Ministry.

2 Recognized as local pastors having completed the Course of Study School are Sonia Denise Gee, Anita Cleaver Dinwiddie,

Mary Louise Jones, John Henry Wilkins, Marshall Andrew Sevier, and back row, Christopher Shane Fryou and Junius Egby, Jr. Not pictured is Kendall Ray Docter.

3 Those recognized for receiving their first appointment are Robbie Murry Alford, Kelly Vicknair Beachman Berne, Charlotte Ann Birdwell and Christopher David Winterman.

4 Recognized as certified lay ministers are Heidi Helen Spell and Charles David Sanders.

FOR MORE
PHOTOS FROM
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ENCE, VISIT WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/LOUISIANA CONFERENCE

Scholars and Awards

Daughenbaugh-Matheny Scholars

Hannah Bergeron, Acadiana District
Kristen Kolwe, Lake Charles District
Abigail Dillard, Baton Rouge District
Micolette Jackson, Baton Rouge District
Victor Robert, Baton Rouge District
Cole Lavergne, Lake Charles District
Alexandra Hornsby, Lake Charles District
Paige Pritchett, Lake Charles District
Logan Settoon, Lake Charles District
Robin Chailland, New Orleans District
Jordan C. Johnson, New Orleans District
Tamara Johnson, New Orleans District
Amanda Willis, New Orleans District
Cameron Brandao, Shreveport District
Alissa Brown, Shreveport District
Calvin Davis, Shreveport District

Ben Green, Shreveport District
Mallory Guillotte, Shreveport District
Collin Hughes, Shreveport District
Emma Viskozki, Shreveport District
Abbie Lea Woods, Shreveport District

Harry Denman Awards

Rev. Darryl A. Tate—Clergy
Amanda Price—Laity
Courtney McKinney—Youth

Sarah Schoefler Award

Margery Manuel

Sojourner Truth Award

Dwane Huderson

Clergy to Participate in *Preaching Excellence Peer Group Plan*

In January of 2014, Perkins School of Theology received a grant from the Lilly Foundation as part of the Lilly Preaching Initiative. Eight seminaries received funding for a five year period, charged with enhancing or launching initiatives in preaching that would accomplish two goals--enliven the teaching of preaching in seminary classrooms through innovative methods and courses, and strengthen the preaching of practitioners serving churches through peer group learning.

Perkins School of Theology plans to accomplish the second goal by instituting the "Perkins Center for Preaching Excellence Peer Group Plan," directed by Dr. Alyce M. McKenzie. The overarching theme for the peer groups is "Telling the Story: Storytelling as a Vehicle for the Gospel."

Eight groups will form over a period of four years, involving a total of 80 pastors.

Beginning in the fall of 2014, four groups of 10 clergy each will form and will pull from United Methodist clergy from four annual conferences (Louisiana, Arkansas, North Texas and Texas), and other denominations as well. Groups will be diverse in gender, ethnicity and experience. Those clergy from the Louisiana Annual Conference who have been invited and who have agreed to participate include: Revs. Bertrand Griffin II, Gretna UMC; Chad Brooks, New Faith Community, Sterlington-North Monroe; Darryl Tate, Rayville UMC; Katie McKay-Simpson, First UMC in Baton Rouge; Jay Hogewood, St. John's UMC in Baton Rouge; Donnie Wilkinson, First UMC in Alexandria; Ramonalynn (R.L.) Bethley, Asbury UMC in Bossier City; and Brady Whitton, First UMC in Baton Rouge.

Each group will have a facilitator, with Rev. Juliet Spencer serving as facilitator for the Louisiana

group. Dr. Craig Gilliam, director of The Center for Pastoral Excellence of the Louisiana Conference, will assist in training the facilitators. Groups will meet eight to 10 times a year, for two years.

There is a Peer Group Plenary Session slated Aug. 25-26 at Perkins; lodging and meals will be covered by the grant.

After that initial group gathering, groups will meet in their local settings, finding a host church as a gathering place. Aided by the facilitator, the groups will draw up a covenant agreement to hold one another accountable.

The first year there will be some core assignments (readings; videos) related to the principles, purpose and importance of storytelling. Participants will gather to offer constructive feedback on one another's preaching. The second year, aided by the guidance of the facilitator, the group will focus on an aspect of storytelling they find energizing for their preaching. There will be funds for each group to use as they see fit. The possibilities are vast and can include: family storytelling; regional storytelling; screenwriting and preaching; recovering forgotten stories in the community; and fiction and storytelling.

A second cohort will begin their two-year process in the fall of 2015. ■

IN MEMORIAM

2014 CLERGY

Homer Vernon Bailes
1922-2013
George W.C. Calvin
1940-2014
John C. Coker
1938-2014
Abraham Davis
1934-2014
John Finch
1962 - 2014
McKinley I. Franklin
1926-2014
Rand Guy
1928-2014
Carol D. Heard
1946-2013
Freddie Henderson
1944-2013
Albert Holland
1940-2014
Melvin Ray Holt
1934-2014
Joe E. Hunter
1926-2013
William Jacobs
John R. Johns
1936-2014
King, Wilson J. King
Denver D. Lyons
1937-2013
Owen Peyton
1951-2013
Jayne Trammell-Kelly
1955-2013

2014 CLERGY SPOUSES

Sue Weaver Arnold
1934-2014
Mary C. Branch
1923- 2013
Una Wilkerson Carroll
1925-2014
Norman Chappell
1929-2013
Marie Christie
1923-2013
Marie Frank Church
1938-2013
Glenda Raye Lanier
1939-2014
Mary Katherine Paine
-2013
Geraldine Crawford Smith
1929-2014
Veda Tohline
1927-2013

LOUISIANA NOW

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Resident Bishop

Rev. Don Cottrill,
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A MESSAGE FROM Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey



“Imagine what might happen if TODAY you began by looking around your neighborhood, paid attention, and learned what challenges children face.”

IN ALMOST EVERY COMMUNITY WE SERVE, there is not only a church, but you can usually count on a school being nearby.

What role does your church play in helping raise the children of your community? I am proud to see so many of you connecting with local schools and playing a major role in the lives of children.

Never has the saying been more true, “It takes a village to raise a child.” The life of a child is so different today; in many ways much harder than it was for many of us.

It seems children are growing up much faster, and face many grown-up challenges ranging from performance on standardize testing, to danger lurking in their midst. I don’t ever remember learning about “stranger danger.” Maybe that is because we knew all of our neighbors. In my case, most of my neighbors were family, not strangers. We did not have to worry about strangers lurking on the Internet. I grew up with party line phones--which meant the greatest danger was that my aunt who lived next door might eavesdrop on my conversation with my best friend. (If you are too young to know what a party line is, ask someone over 50.)

Today, in some communities, children worry that their family might be deported. I remember sitting with a group of third graders, a few years ago, who shared stories of going home after school and learning of parents being deported. In some of our schools, many of the children are on free or reduced lunch. The statistics are staggering – in Louisiana, 253,750 children live in food-insecure households (Feeding America, Map of the Meal Gap, 2012). How can that happen in a state known for food?

Growing up today is hard work.

Our churches can play a huge role in helping raise children in our communities. While feeding, providing backpack ministries and clothing our children are important and noble causes, what might happen if we dig a little deeper and connect in ways that allow us to work on the root causes of the “grown-up”

challenges facing our children? Can we provide a ministry of presence in the lives of these children? I know of a church that mentors children by just showing up each week and spending time with a student, working on an art project or simply shooting a few baskets. You don’t have to know how to do math problems to be a mentor--you just have to BE.

It gets a little harder with every step we take. Can we advocate for better education in our communities? Better teachers, and better pay for teachers? Can we help educate parents? For some of our children the only healthcare they receive is that of the school nurse, yet funding continues to be cut for this important provision. What role might we play in improving healthcare for children?

The challenges are enormous. You may even think this is not the role of the church. If not the church, then who? Who will care for our children? And yet some of you may think the challenges are so enormous, you don’t even know where to begin. So, take a look at what some of your friends are already doing, and “borrow.”

Imagine what might happen if TODAY you began by looking around your neighborhood, paid attention, and learned what challenges children face. What if TODAY you decided to attend the next school board meeting? What if TODAY you met with the principal of the local elementary school and listened for how your church might help him or her do a better job serving the children?

You don’t have to take on the entire educational system of the state of Louisiana, or even your parish—start with the school nearest your church.

If you are clothing and feeding children, please keep doing so. If you are not clothing and feeding children, please start. But, I also ask you to look around your neighborhood and learn more about the greatest challenges facing children. These are not “their” children, they are OUR children. Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me.” ■

Churches, schools & communities

Historically, United Methodist churches throughout the Louisiana Annual Conference have supported their community's local schools. School partnerships are part of a church's larger mission of engaging surrounding neighborhoods, providing a tangible and visible witness of Christ's love for all.

Through mentoring programs, tutoring sessions, art camps and school gardens, local churches can more fully connect with area schools to meet the needs of children, and the needs of the communities in which they live.

Engaging Local Schools uses videos, presentations and supplemental materials to help guide congregations in considering questions that are critical to the success of a school-focused service initiative. Available through the Lewis Center for Church Leadership (with copies housed at each of the six District offices for local church use), this DVD/CD resource assists churches with examining how they can express more fully a heart for the needs of children and schools; helps congregations discern a vision for a school partnership that responds to actual needs and utilizes the unique gifts offered by a church; and provides models and best practices for ministries that support students and teachers. ➔



Chatham UMC hosted "Fun in the Sun" during the summer of 2014. The event kicked off with a weeklong art camp, where children received an age-appropriate overview of art history, focusing heavily on the French Impressionists.

Rev. Lovett Weems, Jr., director of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership, wrote, “Each school has unique needs and every congregation has unique gifts and resources to employ in serving the community. *Engaging Local Schools* outlines steps to take before launching a school partnership to learn better what needs are present in your schools and to assess your congregation’s strengths so that a school partnership plan will be fruitful in your context.”

University UMC, Baton Rouge and Kids Hope

One example of a successful church/school partnership already in existence in the Louisiana Conference is found at University Terrace Elementary, now in a 32-year relationship with University United Methodist Church in Baton Rouge.

The church’s school mentoring program, part of Kids Hope USA, develops one-on-one relationships by pairing church members with at-risk kids in supportive relationships.

University UMC currently has approximately 100 members volunteering at University Terrace Elementary on a weekly basis. The church is located only minutes away from University Terrace Elementary.

The majority of these volunteers serve as mentors working with their child one hour a week, helping their student develop academic, social and emotional skills.

Other volunteers serve as garden team members, book club leaders, prayer partners, uniform team members and teacher encouragers.

Garden team volunteers have worked closely with LSU AgCenter Master Gardeners to create a 3,500 square foot area of flowering and organic edible gardens. “Due to the large consumption of processed and fast foods in most of these children’s homes, childhood obesity and related illnesses are of great concern. We have found that when the children are directly involved in the growing of fruits and vegetables, they are not only willing to eat them at school, but they are also asking their parents to include them in their diets at home,” said Shirley Flake, Kids Hope director for University UMC.

Every year, University UMC holds

churchwide drives to collect school supplies, uniforms, underwear and basic hygiene products.

“These items are very important for the UT students, whose families cannot easily afford to buy them. Close to 95 percent of these children qualify for free or reduced lunch,” said Flake, also a member of University UMC.

According to Flake, every family at University UMC has participated in the Kids Hope initiative, either by donating supplies, or giving of their time in one of a number of volunteer capacities. “The church’s generous outpouring of love onto the students and staff at University Terrace is truly awe-

inspiring. I’ve never presented a need or a request to the congregation that wasn’t immediately met or fulfilled.”

Some of these requests come on an annual basis when the church provides supplies and volunteers for events like teacher appreciation luncheons, a fifth grade recognition ceremony (held in the church’s sanctuary), and a school-wide Christmas Party.

“Our newest phase for Kids Hope is a music program. Funds have been donated by the congregation to provide instrument rentals for 10-15 students in the fourth grade,” said Flake, adding that volunteers will be teaching private music lessons and directing music students in an ensemble.



ABOVE AND RIGHT
University UMC, Baton
Rouge and Kids Hope

BELOW RIGHT
Hope Community UMC
with ABC Institute and
H.O.P.E. Camp



“I want to thank you...for being the director of this wonderful program that gave me a fighting chance...”

Also new this year, an expanded phase of the partnership is being introduced—Kids Hope Next. Through this effort, volunteers will follow their students into middle school, continuing to serve as mentors. “Staying with the children through the challenging junior high years will help to ensure their success in life,” said Flake.

Other United Methodist Churches in the Louisiana Conference participating in the Kids Hope initiative include Camphor Memorial United Methodist Church in Scotlandville (Progress Elementary); Neely UMC, Baton Rouge (Polk Elementary); First UMC, LaPlace (Emily C. Watkins Elementary School); First UMC, Many; First UMC,

Natchitoches (L.P. Vaughn Elementary Middle School); St. Mark UMC, Opelousas (North Elementary School); First UMC, Pineville (Lessie Moore Elementary School); Broadmoor UMC, Shreveport (Arthur Circle Elementary School); Henning Memorial UMC, Sulphur (Frasch Elementary School); and First UMC, Winnfield (Winnfield Primary School).

Occasionally, the volunteers at University UMC are encouraged in their efforts by hearing success stories from former students. One such student, Elie Nyembo, is now enrolled in Southwest Tennessee Community College.

Nyembo, a refugee from Rwanda, Africa

and a former student at University Terrace, recently communicated with Flake, writing, “I want to thank you . . . for being the director of this wonderful program that gave me a fighting chance. . . I hope that years later you’d get a letter from another kid who has been impacted greatly by this program, as I was. God bless!”

For more information, contact Shirley Flake at Shirley.flake@gmail.com

Hope Community UMC with ABC Institute and H.O.P.E Camp

In the city of Baton Rouge, the 70805 zip code is marked by poverty and violence. More than one third of the area’s residents are under the age of 18. Hope Community UMC is located in the middle of this area, and provides an oasis of love and nurturing for these children and their parents.

In response to the significant needs of the community it serves, the congregation of Hope Community UMC offers practical help to neighbors through its ABC Institute of Learning.

Now in its fifth year, the tutoring program is held every Tuesday and Thursday during the school year for two hours per session. Students in Kindergarten through 12th grades are assisted with homework assignments and provided computers and school supplies, with a focus on preparing for LEAP testing. The end of the school year is highlighted by a book giveaway.

To maintain its connection to these underserved children, Hope Community UMC hosts a summer camp every year. This year, 81 children participated in the event. Staffed by volunteers from the church and the surrounding community, H.O.P.E. Summer Camp strives to minister to the mind, body and spirit of children ages five to 15.

During June and July, children attend the camp from 7 a.m.-4:30 p.m. There is a morning devotion, and children participate in Christian education, academic tutoring, arts and crafts opportunities and physical activities.

The BREC Mobile Playground is a big attraction for the kids, as well as visits from the local bookmobile. Highlights include



50 WAYS TO ENGAGE LOCAL SCHOOLS

THE TIPS BELOW are excerpted from a list found on the Lewis Center for Church Leadership website. Additional information can be found in *Engaging Local Schools*, a resource which uses videos, presentations and supplemental materials to help guide congregations in considering questions that are critical to the success of a school-focused service initiative. Copies of the resource can be obtained through the Lewis Center at <http://www.churchleadership.com/serveyourneighbor/EngagingLocalSchools.asp>; also, copies are housed at the Conference office and at each of the six District offices for local church use. The full list of *50 Ways to Engage Local Schools* can be found at <http://www.churchleadership.com/50Ways/Schools.html>



Collect books to be used in classroom reading programs or to be given to children at the end of the school year. Ask teachers or the librarian for appropriate selections.

Develop a program to outfit kids with needed school uniforms, shoes or athletic gear.

Fill backpacks with school supplies to be given away at the beginning of the school year.

Start a summer lunch program in your church or another suitable location.

Involve volunteers from your church in tutoring, mentoring or after-school programs.

Create and support a computer lab either in your church or your school.

Organize and resource a summer academic enrichment program in your school or church to counter summer learning losses.

Offer college-bound students SAT prep-sessions, guidance on college selections, and help in completing financial aid forms and applications.

Organize a volunteer workday to spruce up school facilities, helping with cleaning, painting, landscaping, facilities repair, etc.

Make church facilities available for team banquets, parties after school dramas, offsite meetings, or other school-related activities.

Host an event to celebrate and recognize teachers in your congregation and community.

Provide classroom volunteers. Many teachers value this help above all else.

field trips, movies, kite making, constructing corncob dolls and learning to “play jacks with the pastor,” Rev. Louis Jones. “Last summer, there was great excitement when the children had a visit from the pastor’s pet chicken, Liz!,” said Gert Knight, church member and camp volunteer.

As a direct result of their experience with the camp, and with Hope Community UMC, a family of four is going to be baptized at the church, said Knight, who adds that she can see the difference the camp makes in the lives of the children.

“H.O.P.E. Camp provides a positive environment for the kids during the summer, exposing them to various things, and bringing Christ into their lives. It’s hard work, but it is rewarding work for all of the volunteers. It’s remarkable to see how many people from both the church and the community come together to make this happen,” added Knight.

For more information about ABC Institute of Learning and H.O.P.E Summer Camp, contact Rev. H. Louis Jones at (225) 938-9615.

First UMC, Alexandria and ‘Keyhole’ Garden

Keyhole gardens can help unlock access to vegetables for urban “food deserts,” according to Wayne McConnell, a member of First United Methodist Church in Alexandria.

Along with McConnell, members of First UMC are creating such a garden at L.S. Rugg Elementary School as part of the Cornucopia Project, allowing students to participate in the process of growing their own vegetables. McConnell is a retired teacher for the Rapides Parish School System.

“We’re excited about our partnership in working with First United Methodist Church in creating the garden, and the students are looking forward to being a part of this community project and growing the vegetables,” said Vickie Smith, principal at Rugg.

A keyhole garden is a circular raised bed with a path to the center for access to a compost basket that allows water to flow into the soil and reach the roots of the plants. From above, the garden looks like a keyhole or a pie with a slice cut out. One advantage is that these types of gardens re-



First UMC, Alexandria
"keyhole garden"



"Last summer, there was great excitement when the children had a visit from the pastor's pet chicken, Liz!"

quire little moisture.

McConnell, who has "always had a passion for gardening," started thinking about "food deserts"—areas that lack grocery stores selling fresh produce. He mentioned to Rev. Donnie Wilkinson, pastor of First UMC, that the church needed to become involved in community gardening.

McConnell realized that keyhole gardens, like those also built by African humanitarian groups, could be created in community neighborhoods where they are needed. Rev. Wilkinson agreed that the garden "would be a good idea."

Rev. Wilkinson approached Principal

Smith with the concept—and the rest is history.

Members of First UMC, Alexandria have also been saving materials to be used for compost in the keyhole garden. Items like cardboard, phone books, newspapers, grass clippings, leaves and coffee grounds are used to create the compost heap.

McConnell said he was inspired by the book *Take this Bread* (published 2007) by Sara Miles, and by a visit to The Shepherd's Market food pantry at St. John's UMC in Baton Rouge.

"I want our church take care of those people who fall through the cracks, who

don't have a green card, who may not be a resident, who may be homeless, who may not have a place where they can cook a lot of food because they're homeless...but they can have some fresh fruit they can eat," he said.

"We can show the love of Jesus through what we do, and when you feed somebody, it's a powerful thing," he added.

The Food Bank of Central Louisiana plans to partner with the church, and is already involved in building community gardens. "They have the plans, they have (the) knowledge, and they have connections out in the community," said McConnell.

The teachers at the elementary school hope to incorporate the garden into projects focusing on science and health, social studies and economics.

For more information, contact Wayne McConnell at (318) 729-3103 or Clara Woolf at (318) 443-5696, ext. 106.

Chatham UMC and 'Fun in the Son'

In the spring of 2013, Chatham United Methodist Church was searching for a way to keep track of students that they had been tutoring for the past nine months. The congregation also wanted to reach out to other community children during the summer in order to expand on its ministry momentum.

Church volunteers also wanted to find a way to enrich the education of local school children in ways that they could not provide for themselves.

From this brainstorming effort, "Fun in the Son" summer camp was born.

Janet Smith and Freida Peel, co-program directors for the initiative, worked with Rev. Lala Ball Cooper, pastor of Chatham UMC, to field test the idea of providing enrichment activities for the children and youth

continued on page 11



Chatham UMC
'Fun in the Son'

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church to church ministry



assortment of odd jobs for the aging members of the Jonesboro church and Hodge UMC. The team also installed energy saving ceiling fans in the church, as well as performing “security work” on the parsonage.

Mary, a 90-year-old plus member of Hodge UMC, was helped by the University UMC volunteers, who fixed plumbing and caulked windows in her home. “She is accustomed to taking care of her own stuff, and would not have asked for help, but her daughter did so on her behalf,” said Rev. Hooton.

After the team left, Mary stopped by the church office to ask for an address where she could send a thank you note to the volunteers. “The team and Mary had some good fellowship time while completing the work; and the group prayed with her before leaving,” added Hooton.

The team used a Facebook page to share pictures from their experiences, encouraging one another to “lean into” this adventure.

Jennifer Swann, coordinator for the University UMC group, had this to say about the experience: “The idea was hatched at one of our monthly 20s and 30s planning group meetings. From there, we pulled in leaders from other age and ministry groups to divide the work. Our goal was to design a mission trip that didn’t have the usual barriers to participation. We wanted to do it without having to leave our families behind for several days and without having to take a lot of time off work. It was also important to keep costs down so that we could bring more people without having to be constantly fundraising. The bonus was having the ‘fun’ built into the experience with our stay at the state park.”

Swann added that the team modeled the trip after a recent mission to Guatemala taken by some University UMC members with the McNeese Wesley Foundation at McNeese. “A plus is that the mission to Jonesboro was completed without the air travel and overall expense.”

Rev. Hooton said, “This collaboration was a great example of spiritual leadership and living into the United Methodist connection, making disciples for Jesus Christ.” ■



Jonesboro UMC and University UMC, Lake Charles collaborate on VBS, family mission

Jonesboro United Methodist Church wanted to hold a community-wide Vacation Bible School this summer. But with a congregation trending ages 50 and over, the church needed intentional planning—and help from outside the congregation.

University UMC in Lake Charles was looking for a mission opportunity for all ages which provided a family “get away.” As an example of “the connection at its best,” a 48-member team from University UMC in Lake Charles traveled to Jonesboro to help

the church coordinate and host its Vacation Bible School. More than 20 local children—plus 15 children traveling with the University UMC team—attended the three-day event, which concluded with an invitation to area children and their families to worship at Jonesboro UMC on Sunday morning.

This special worship service also included Hodge UMC, part of a church charge with Jonesboro UMC. “That day, there were more than 100 people in the sanctuary, with the mission team, kids from the community, my usual Jonesboro UMC crowd, and a good representation from the Hodge church. Folks had to ‘scooch over’ to make room for all!” said Rev. Hooton, pastor of the Jonesboro-Hodge-Dodson-New Hope UMCs charge.

Members of the team from University UMC stayed in rented cabins at Jimmy Davis State Park during their visit to Jonesboro, which stretched from July 30-Aug. 3. In addition to helping with VBS, the group did an

Yvette Richards

National President, UMW to speak at the Louisiana Annual Conference

Yvette Richards, the national president of United Methodist Women, will be speaking in the Louisiana Annual Conference on Oct. 19 at St. Mark United Methodist Church, 6217 Glen Oaks Dr. in Baton Rouge, at 10 a.m.

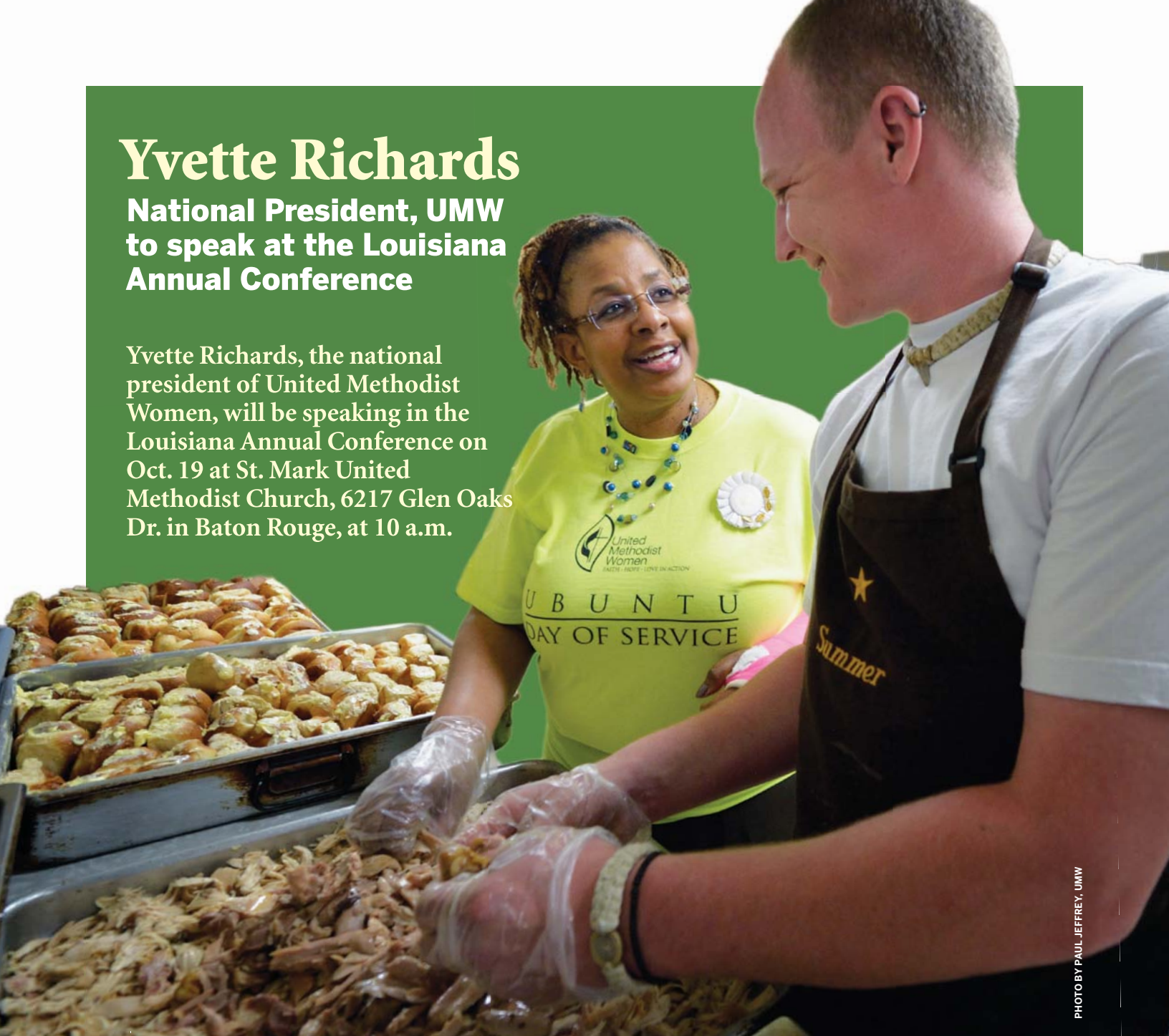


PHOTO BY PAUL JEFFREY, UMW

Richards will use the theme “Sisters With A Purpose - Making It Happen,” branching off the UMW Assembly 2014 theme, “Make It Happen.”

A graduate of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, Richards hold a Bachelor of Arts degree in Mass Communications. She is also a graduate of Walden University with a Master of Science in Leadership. Richards has been employed for 27 years with State Farm Insurance Companies, and currently serves the company as a catastrophe service claims representative.

Richards is highly involved in community, with a special interest in Girl Scouts of

America and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. Her leadership positions in the Missouri West Conference United Methodist Women include membership chair, nominating committee, and Dean of the Missouri Co-op School of Christian Mission. She has served as the Women’s Division Director from 2008-2012, Global Aids Fund board member from 2011-2012 and on the General Board of Global Ministry from 2011-2012.

Julia Carnes, president of St. Mark United Methodist Women, invites all United Methodist Women throughout the Louisiana Conference to hear Richards speak as she participates in St. Mark UMC’s Women’s Day. ■

ABOVE Yvette Richards (left), president of the United Methodist Women Board of Directors, helps prepare food at the Fourth Avenue United Methodist Church during the Ubuntu Day of Service. With her is Andrew Thomas, the lead chef.



Churches, schools & communities

continued from page 7

of the Greater Chatham community—opportunities that schools may have formerly provided, but opportunities that were no longer funded for schools.

The church offered a one-day art event, in addition to a series of music and movement activities that were well attended.

“The really BIG undertaking that summer was to provide swimming lessons for our community kids. Almost as soon as we announced our intentions to do that very thing, the classes filled to capacity and we had to make a waiting list,” said Rev. Cooper.

Living in a community where creeks, canals and ditches often swell with rain water during the warm months, the possibility of drowning is a significant danger to Chatham children. “It quickly became a purpose of this series of lessons to ‘drown-proof’ the community children so that they would be able to swim in order to survive in a difficult situation,” added Cooper.

The overwhelming popularity of the 2013 activities encouraged Chatham UMC to host “Fun in the Son” during the summer of 2014. The event kicked off with a weeklong art camp, where children received an age-

appropriate overview of art history, focusing heavily on the French Impressionists. During the camp, students experimented with several different art mediums.

Once again, swim camp was offered, followed by weekly youth swim nights and family swim nights for the rest of the summer.

Praise camp, the last camp for the summer, featured music and movement in the context of celebration and worship. “Our community children really enjoyed the week-long experience that culminated in a musical program attended by parents, church members and friends from the community,” said Rev. Cooper.

All activities are offered at no cost and target children in Pre-K through high school.

“Parents have been generous with their praise for our programs, posting words of gratitude on our church Facebook page. It has been an incredible joy not only to relate to these precious children, but also to build relationships with their parents,” said Rev. Cooper.

For more information about “Fun in the Son,” contact Rev. Lala Cooper at lalacooper@aol.com

CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER

9/25-30

Spiritual Academy Fall Retreat
The Wesley Center, Woodworth, La.

OCTOBER

10/4

Spiritual Directors Class of
2014-2016 Orientation
Horseshoe Drive UMC,
Alexandria, La.

10/5

World Communion Day Special
Offering

10/5-6

Order of Deacons Retreat
The Wesley Center, Woodworth, La.

10/10-11

United Methodist Women Annual
Meeting
First UMC, Baton Rouge, La.

10/11

2014 Louisiana Skeeter Run
Baton Rouge, Lake Charles,
Ruston, Mandeville

10/12-14

Clergy Retirees Retreat

10/16-19

Cursillo Retreat
The Wesley Center, Woodworth, La.

NOVEMBER

11/7-9

Junior High Retreat
The Wesley Center, Woodworth, La.

DECEMBER

12/14

Children's Home Christmas
Offering

12/25

Christmas Day

IN MEMORIAM

Rev. Arthur M. Baker
5/28/2014

Patricia Norton
5/29/2014

Madice King
7/4/2014

Maude Wallace
7/15/2014

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